



## Farm Bill Puts Iowa First

**Q:** Senator Harkin, I’ve read a lot about the new farm bill but I haven’t heard enough about why this bill is good for Iowa. Why do you think that Iowa will fare so well under this bill?

**A:** When I became the first Iowan to chair the Senate Agriculture in nearly a century, I committed myself to passing a comprehensive, balanced approach to commodity and conservation programs that helped Iowa farm families and rural communities.

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Iowans have been an integral part of writing the farm bill. I traveled across Iowa holding hearings to gather the input of Iowa farmers and rural community leaders. The one thing I heard in every conversation is that we needed to have an effective farm income safety net that included a strong counter-cyclical element to help when times are tough.

I’m proud to say the new farm bill does just that. We now have a new farm bill that not only has a more reliable system of income protection; it also provides an 80 percent increase in conservation spending, a major investment in rural development, and an energy title for the first time ever.

Iowa wins under this approach according to independent research done by The Federal Agriculture Research and Policy Institute (FAPRI). According to FAPRI, Iowa will receive more in the commodity programs alone than any other state – nearly \$1.4 billion a year over the life of the farm bill. That means Iowa will receive at least \$485 million more in farm payments from the new farm bill than with Freedom to Farm.

Additionally, the farm bill will allow producers to update program bases and yields. The loan rates for Iowa’s major commodities will be increased after standing stagnate for nearly a decade. The bill restores a more rational relationship among the loan rates of the major program commodities, allowing farmers to base their cultivation decisions on agronomic and market conditions, not government programs. The updated bases and yields, along with an effective target price system will provide a straightforward, understandable system of income protection.

Iowans will also benefit from the conservation provisions in this farm bill. Since Iowa has so much agriculture, our state stands to benefit from the farm bill’s conservation provisions. Important programs such as the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) were increased to 39.2 million acres. The Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) was also increased to 2.275 million acres. While funds for working lands were dramatically increased, the bill also included a more than five fold increase for the Environmental Quality Incentives Program.

Iowans will also benefit from the largest, new initiative in this bill, the Conservation Security Program, which I first introduced in 1999. It is a voluntary incentive program for adopting and maintaining conservation practices on land in production. Under this program the more conservation applied to the land, the higher the payments.